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A PhD in motion: Advancing a critical academic mobilities approach (CAMA) to researching short-term mobility schemes for doctoral students

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Abstract

Short-term mobility has been neglected in the higher education mobilities literature, which tends to focus on longer stays such as study abroad or entire degrees. Short-term doctoral mobility schemes are relatively low-cost, potentially high-value investments in the development of early career researchers. Doctoral mobilities research – and the field of academic mobilities research more broadly – is characterised by a positivist, often atheoretical orientation; this article responds to this by introducing a critical academic mobilities approach (CAMA). This approach is rooted in the ‘mobilities paradigm’, and involves (i) questioning the status of mobility as a universal good; (ii) exploring the subjectivity of mobile subjects as dynamic and shifting, but also structurally determined; (iii) a commitment to researching mobility processes as well as investments and outcomes. The article explores ‘autoethno-case studies’ of two doctoral mobility schemes funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC): Overseas Institutional Visits (OIV) and the PhD Partnering Scheme (PPS).

Keywords

Doctoral mobility; critical academic mobilities approach; PhD study; academic mobility funding; mobilities paradigm

Introduction

Short-term doctoral mobility schemes (measured in days and weeks rather than months and years) are relatively low-cost, potentially high-value investments for the development of early career researchers (ECRs). Funding for doctoral researchers to engage in international academic mobility is believed to have the indirect benefit of enhancing future mobility (Netz and Jaksztat, 2014; Saint-Blancat, 2018). Short-term doctoral mobility schemes may involve research training (Avveduto, 2001), funding for conference travel (Henderson, 2015), and international visits to research centres and organisations (McLeod and Bloch, 2010); these types of academic travel are differentiated from longer term doctoral mobility which includes ‘degree mobility’ (Wächter, 2014), split-site doctorates, and extended study abroad and secondment schemes (Ackers, Gill and Guth, 2007). This article focuses in particular on funded international visits to other higher education institutions. Two doctoral mobility schemes are explored as case studies: the Overseas Institutional Visit (OIV) scheme and the PhD partnering scheme (PPS), both of which were available for doctoral students who were funded by the UK ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) in 2013-2015.

This article contributes to current research on academic mobilities on two levels. Firstly, the article focuses on short-term academic mobility, which has not received as much scholarly attention as longer term mobility. Secondly, the article draws together research in the field of mobilities studies, particularly with reference to the mobilities paradigm (Büscher and Urry, 2009; Urry, 2007; Urry and Larsen, 2011), and research on academic mobility, which currently often operate as discrete areas of study. By bringing together these two fields of study, the article contributes to a small but growing critical approach to academic mobilities research (see eg. Fahey and Kenway, 2010a; Fahey and Kenway, 2010b; Jöns, 2011; Kenway and Fahey, 2009; Kim, 2010; Kim, 2014; Ploner, 2017; Robertson, 2010). Critical academic mobilities research, though employing different theoretical

resources and studying different participants and sites, is united in the following ways: (i) a critical view of mobility that includes questioning its status as a universal good, and also what counts as ‘mobility’ (and ‘immobility’); (ii) an approach to researching mobility that explores the subjectivity of mobile subjects as fluid, dynamic and shifting, but also structurally determined through inequalities of access to mobility and/or stability; (iii) a commitment to researching mobility *processes* (in addition to investments and outcomes). The critical academic mobilities approach, which is consolidated in this article and referred to as CAMA, is explored in greater depth later in the article.

Short-term academic/doctoral mobility: a critical academic mobilities approach (CAMA)

Short-term academic/doctoral mobility

Short-term academic mobility is an elastic concept which expands and contracts on the basis of subjective perceptions of time. In Fahey and Kenway’s (2010a) typology of academic mobility types, short-term mobility falls into the fourth type, ‘being away for short periods’ (p. 572), but there are huge variations in what counts as ‘short’. In Avveduto’s (2001) study of doctoral mobility, for example, participants considered that the minimum acceptable duration of visit was three months, with six months as the ideal. The language in which minimum standards are couched is not neutral; it is in fact inflected with normative ideals of what is ‘long enough’. This is noticeable in Avveduto’s study, where participants considered that a sojourn of no less than six months delivers ‘a *reasonable* amount of time to draw academic benefit from the experience’ (ibid., p. 235, emphasis added; see also Guth and Gill, 2008). This sense of ‘a reasonable amount of time’ varies, however; one of the two schemes that are analysed in this article set a *maximum* stay of 13 weeks, thus moving the markers of ‘reasonable’ to the minimum standards set in Avveduto’s account. Assumptions of what counts as a significant period of mobility are also reflected at a methodological level in this area of

research; for example, Bonnard, Calmand and Giret (2017) set three months as the minimum time away as the basis of their sample, thus excluding shorter stays from the study of this phenomenon.

Short-term mobility, then, is a flexible concept that is defined against what it is not. Returning to Fahey and Kenway's (2010a) typology of academic mobility types, short-term mobility is neither 'always on the move', nor 'going and staying away' (p. 572), and nor is it the longer term mobility characterised by Wächter (2014) as 'degree mobility'. However, there are some overlaps between short-term mobility and other forms. It is important to understand short-term mobility as *both* characterised by going away from and coming back to the same place, *and* as integral to the formation of a "transnational" academic mobility, where 'academics mov[e] "between" or "above" territorial boundaries' (Kim, 2009a, p. 395). In this sense, we can examine short-term mobility sojourns as discrete periods of travel, and also as contributing to a general frenetic mobility (known as 'high mobility' (Viry and Kaufmann, 2015)). It is also noteworthy that the minimum standards of short-term mobility duration shift according to career stage, family circumstances, and age, with the minimum standards of 'short-term mobility' being longer for early career researchers than for senior academics (Netz and Jaksztat, 2014).

Short-term doctoral mobility shares many characteristics with the mobility of academics, particularly regarding the development of international networks. However, there are some specificities to short-term doctoral mobility, which result from the hybrid status of doctoral students as both students and (proto-)academics. Where doctoral students are perceived as students, mobility becomes part of their curriculum. This can be in relation to technical knowledge gain, where mobility provides access to different or superior research facilities (Avveduto, 2001; Guth and Gill, 2008), and/or as the early accrual of transnational academic capital, which includes transnational networks and modes of thinking (Kim, 2010; Kim, 2017). This exposure to knowledge and transnational academic capital

can be construed as having a direct impact on the quality of the doctoral project itself. Where doctoral students are perceived as (proto-)academics and researchers, their mobility is construed as future-oriented, an investment not just in of-the-moment research productivity; the doctoral student represents an academic subject which is still in formation, still malleable (Burford, 2017; Grant, 2003). As such, the doctorate is constructed not so much as a discrete period, but rather as a key phase in the academic career for investment and intervention. Importantly, then, an investment in doctoral mobility is not just an investment in the quality of the doctoral research output: it is also a long-term investment in the internationalisation of research and higher education.

Critical academic mobilities approach (CAMA) – implications for researching short-term doctoral/academic mobility

Thus far in this article, short-term doctoral mobility has been defined as characterized by its duration, which is subjectively determined; its nature as both a discrete sojourn and as part of the fabric of transnational academic living; its direct contribution to the doctorate and/or its role in shaping the future. This initial framing of doctoral mobility invokes a human capital theorization of educational investment, in which investing in the development of an individual's skills and knowledge leads to enhanced productivity, and therefore to personal returns and economic growth (Cheek, Santos and Vaillant, 2015; Marginson, 2017; Mincer, 1984). As discussed by Kim (2009b, p. 396), transnational academic mobility is often framed in 'neoliberal' and 'market-oriented' terms. However a number of scholars are engaging in alternative theorizations of academic mobility which call into question some of the basic tenets and assumptions of the universal benefits of mobility. As noted by Robertson (2010, p. 642), academic mobility is 'conceived of as a positive force; a powerful mechanism of social change': 'this overly romantic rendering of mobility' (ibid.) conceals the numerous issues which accompany academic mobility. According to a critical academic mobilities approach (henceforth referred to as CAMA), the framing of mobility as an unquestioned universal good should

be critiqued. For academic mobility is capable of enacting neocolonialism and cultural othering (França, Alves and Padilla, 2018; Manathunga, 2017), and reproducing global hierarchies of higher education (Morley *et al*, 2018; Unterhalter and Carpentier, 2010), just as it is capable of undermining cultural stereotypes and kick-starting the decolonisation and democratisation of knowledge production (and augmenting human capital and economic growth). In relation to short-term doctoral mobility, this article questions the universal good of mobility for the doctoral student and (proto-)academic.

CAMA does not just call into question the concept of mobility itself, but it also foregrounds the construction of the mobile subject. In an idealistic formulation of the neoliberal academic subject, the doctoral researcher embarks on a period of mobility whose length is determined by an algorithm that balances the accrual of skills, knowledge and transnational academic capital with value-for-money; the mobility contributes positively to both the doctoral project and to the international nature of the future academic career. A critical perspective views mobile subjects as both fluid, dynamic and shifting *and* as structurally determined through inequalities of access to mobility and/or stability. The subjectivity of mobile subjects is in part structurally determined through inequalities of access to mobility and/or stability. The aforementioned difference between expected length of stay for early career academics and senior colleagues (Netz and Jaksztat, 2014) comes to the fore here. This conflation of age and family circumstances with career stage leads to problematic assumptions of motility for doctoral students. Motility is the *capability* of engaging in mobility, which is based on the ‘social conditions of access’, ‘the skills required’, and ‘mobility plans’ (Dubois *et al*, 2015, p. 102). In an increasingly internationalised higher education sector, postdoctoral positions and lecturer level posts are often advertised with an explicit or implicit mobility criterion, as shown in the European study GARCIA (Herschberg, Benschop and van den Brink, 2016). This criterion exerts a retrospective mobility imperative onto doctoral students, thus presuming the conversion of motility

into mobility during the doctoral stage. Numerous research studies have demonstrated the challenges of engaging in international academic mobility for people with caring responsibilities, particularly women (Henderson, forthcoming; Henderson & Moreau, in review; Jöns, 2011; Leemann, 2010; Loveridge, Doyle and Faamanatu-Eteuati, 2017). These challenges are intensified for doctoral students with caring responsibilities, who are often in a relatively insecure financial situation (Hook, 2016). Doctoral mobility is framed as both an imperative for future career success and also a highly exclusionary expectation.

A critical approach to researching short-term doctoral mobility involves conceptualising doctoral students as a heterogeneous group who experience different conditions of access to mobility. As well as being structurally determined, mobile subjectivity is fluid, dynamic and shifting. As such, it is difficult to assess the benefits – and negative effects – of doctoral mobility on the individual, as subject formation does not follow a straightforward logic of ‘before and after’. Mobile students do not ‘mov[e] back and forth between two restricted states in a dichotomous manner...exchang[ing] one national identity for another’ (Bilecen, 2013, p. 669). Rather, we can conceptualise ‘internationalising institutions of higher learning’ as ‘sites where individuals located differently in global power relationships engage in struggles over identity and culture’ (van Oorschot, 2013, pp. 899-900). These identity struggles, the mobility of ‘lumpy, fragile, aged, gendered, racialised bodies’ as they ‘encounter other bodies, objects and the physical world multi-sensuously’ (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 21), do not translate into easily measured outcomes. When researching short-term doctoral mobility, then, it is important to consider that a discrete, seemingly clear-cut sojourn does not clearly translate into a measurable mobile moment.

The third aspect to CAMA is the focus on mobility *processes* in addition to investments and outcomes. This aspect of the approach builds on the ‘mobilities paradigm’ (Büscher and Urry, 2009;

Urry, 2007; Urry and Larsen, 2011) and refers to the ways in which mobile subjects' mobility is enacted. The crucial contribution of the mobilities paradigm to contemporary social sciences research is its insistence on the epistemological and methodological challenges that researching mobilities brings to traditional research approaches. For, according to Urry (2007, p. 44), mobilities 'require a wholesale revision of the ways in which social phenomena have been historically examined'. Researching within the mobilities paradigm can involve paying attention to the materiality of mobility, where academic mobility 'break[s] routines and turn[s] the world upside down' (Parker and Weik, 2014, p. 169). This does not just mean describing the material aspects of travel, but considering how 'physical travel' prompts 'ontological travel' (Barnett and Phipps, 2005, p. 5), meaning that mobility impacts on the ways in which material reality itself is experienced. CAMA therefore leads researchers to question the assumptions that underpin mobility, mobile subjects, and the processes of mobility. In the next section of the article, these considerations are further explored in relation to researching short-term doctoral mobility.

Researching short-term doctoral mobility schemes

Much of the existing research on academic mobility is conducted within a positivist paradigm, using relatively large-scale survey techniques, with quantitative data processing. Large-scale data sets are useful in developing our understanding of the academic mobility phenomenon, given their ability to demonstrate mobility trends and commonalities across different mobile groups. However, it is also useful to produce smaller studies which are able to probe more deeply into the nuances of individuals' mobility trajectories. This paper is underpinned by a small-scale, in-depth analysis of doctoral mobility schemes which illustrates the critical stance of CAMA. The analysis focuses on the author's own participation in two short-term funded doctoral mobility schemes. Autoethnographic research, in which the author is both the subject and the object of research (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011; Spry, 2001), is as yet relatively uncommon in the field of higher education research.

However, there is a strong argument for engaging in autoethnographic research of academic mobility, which argument can be delineated within CAMA. Because the researcher is understood in autoethnographic research as both researcher and participant, they are in a unique position to speak back to the conceptual and methodological assumptions that they encounter during the research process (Henderson, 2018).

Autoethnographic research has been maligned as unscholarly ‘self-obsession’ (Delamont, 2009, p. 58), but unfortunately this reputation in some parts of social sciences research has been gained from a small sample of undertheorised autoethnographies. Autoethnographic research should operate as ‘a systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation about self and social phenomena involving self’ (Ngunjiri, Hernandez and Chang, 2010, p. 2). Importantly, autoethnographic analysis ‘focus[es not] on the self per se but on the space between self and the practice engaged in’ (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). As such, the emphasis is on the interaction between the researcher-participant and the phenomenon being researched, with autoethnography providing a unique vantage point for the exploration of subjectivity in a social setting. This vantage point is particularly salient for CAMA, considering the second aspect of this approach, where mobile subjectivity is conceptualised as fluid and dynamic. In the mobilities paradigm, it is considered beneficial if researchers are ‘physically travelling with their research subjects’, thus ‘allowing themselves to be moved by, and to move with, their research subjects’ (Büscher and Urry, 2009, p. 103); an autoethnographic approach encapsulates this researcher-participant mobility. Furthermore, autoethnographic studies have sought to capture ‘flux and movement’ (Jones, 2005, p. 764) and to ‘[r]efus[e] closure or categorisation’ (ibid., 765).

This comparative case study (Stake, 1978) of two mobility schemes uses the ‘ethno-case study approach’ (Parker-Jenkins, 2016, p. 8), which is rooted in ethnographic research. Acknowledging the

overlap between ethnographic and case study approaches, Parker-Jenkins (ibid.) defines the ethno-case study as including multiple forms of data collection, centred around the study of people. This article modulates the ethno-case study further, to the ‘autoethno-case study’. The two doctoral mobility schemes are analysed using documentary analysis of: mobility scheme information and applicant guidance; visit funding applications and reports; visit documents eg. event programmes, activity plans, receipts, accommodation information, course information, flyers; pages from my appointments diary; my notes. The documents are supplemented by the researcher’s memories that are evoked by returning to the documentary corpus, which have been recorded as written notes. The inclusion of autoethnographic analysis (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011) in this study brings a unique depth to the analysis of the schemes, through longitudinal reflections on the outcomes and continued importance of the schemes in relation to the researcher’s career development. The analysis of the case study mobility schemes is closely structured around the three facets of the CAMA framework introduced in the previous section.

Two short-term doctoral mobility schemes – a comparative analysis using CAMA

Introduction to the mobility schemes

The two doctoral mobility schemes considered in this article were both funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), UK, for students on ESRC-funded PhD studentships, and both schemes offered funding for short-term mobility. However this is where the similarity ends. The key differences between the schemes are shown in Table 1. A significant difference was between the funding resources for the schemes. For the OIV, a total of £2,100 was allocated for 3 visits to France for one person for eight weeks in total, based on ESRC set rates for travel and subsistence. Crucially, no funding was available for accommodation. The PPS entailed a £7,000 contribution from ESRC, plus contributions from the UK and host universities. The total budget for the PPS amounted to

£14,330. It is difficult to compare the two schemes along financial lines, as the number of people travelling was greater for the PPS (four people from South Africa for the UK visit, three from the UK for the South Africa visit, plus one person for a further South Africa visit), the travel costs were more expensive for South Africa, but the living costs and accommodation rates were lower than France. Although comparison is difficult, the fact that the bidding team could include costings for the PPS, while the OIV was restricted by ESRC set rates, meant that the PPS could use accurate rates and include accommodation fees; the overall experience of the OIV was financial struggle, while the PPS was experienced as well-resourced.

[Table 1 about here]

Guth and Gill (2008) refer to the major influences on doctoral mobility; OIV and PPS relate to two different influences. In the case of the OIV, this reflects Guth and Gill's (ibid., p. 834) finding that 'a significant proportion of our respondents had some experience of their host country during their first degree'. I had spent the third year of my undergraduate degree in Paris, and was keen to return during my doctoral studies. My key contact and the referee for the application was an academic whose lecture series I had attended as an undergraduate; although we did not formally meet during that time, he readily supported my application. The PPS on the other hand reflected another major influence named by Guth and Gill – that of supervisor links and mobility, where the supervisor transfers their networks to the supervisee. Both of my doctoral supervisors had strong links with South Africa, and my first supervisor was of South African origin and had already worked with the head of the research centre.

In terms of the structure of the visits, the OIV was based on an informal affiliation with a university in Paris, France, and involved three visits to Paris: four weeks in spring term of 2012/2013 (the first

year of my PhD); two weeks in autumn term of 2013/2014 (second year); two weeks in spring term of 2014/2015 (third year). The PPS was based on a more formal affiliation with University of the Free State (UFS), Bloemfontein, South Africa, and involved three visits: two doctoral students, a post-doctoral fellow and the doctoral supervisor from UFS visited London for 10 days in spring term 2012/2013 (first year); the doctoral student with two doctoral supervisors visited Bloemfontein for two weeks in summer term 2013/2014 (second year); the doctoral student visited Bloemfontein for 10 days in autumn term 2015/2016 (during the extension to the third year from the OIV – see table 1). The nature of the visits is discussed further below, but in summary the OIV was characterised by attending events and classes, and the PPS involved active participation in discussions and events.

Mobility as a universal good

This section analyses the OIV and PPS according to the first facet of CAMA, where mobility as a universal good is called into question. The guidance and application documents for the OIV reflect the discourses identified above, in relation to the potential of international doctoral mobility to enhance both the current and future success of the student (and therefore interlinking doctoral mobility with the academic mobility imperative). The OIV section in the ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide (ESRC, 2014) notes that the purpose of the OIV is to ‘support and encourage the *international engagement* of ESRC funded students’ (p. 26, emphasis added), to ‘establish links that will be beneficial to their *current or future academic career*’ (ibid, emphasis added). The application form (ESRCb, n.d.) also states that the applicant must ‘demonstrate how the visit/s will offer “added value” to their PhD experience’ (n.p.). The documentation encourages a skills-based approach to the visit, listing potential activities as ‘research training’, ‘language skills’, ‘research links’, ‘disseminat[ion], ‘attend[ing]...seminars where directly relevant’ (ESRC, 2014, p. 26). The scheme is therefore constructed as both skills-based (and therefore measurable in terms of ‘added value’) and

as potentially beneficial to the ‘future academic career’ (a more abstract outcome which is harder to measure).

Similarly to the OIV scheme guidance, the PPS guidance also frames mobility as a positive force. The guidance takes a different form, in that it is not located in the Postgraduate Funding Guide, but is a separate ‘specification’ document (ESRCa, n.d.) which had been created for the pilot phase of this scheme. The specification envisages that supervisors will lead on the bid (as opposed to the OIV which is at least in theory student led), and that they will then identify students for the opportunity. The PPS specification states that the goal is to produce an ‘*international cohort of ECRs* [early career researchers] with the skills, links and contacts to operate in the global research environment’ (p.2, emphasis added). While the framing matches that of the OIV, the difference lies in the fact that the OIV’s aim is to develop the international engagement of the UK PhD student, whereas the PPS aspires to craft long-lasting links between PhD students in different country contexts. The PPS specification places emphasis on developing institutional (rather than individual) links, which are considered to bring the ‘greatest added value’ (p. 1) because they build on ‘social and human capital of...supervisors’ (ibid.), meaning that mobility channels are already open to the PhD students. As with the OIV, PPS is future-oriented, in that the specification recognises the potential for doctoral mobility to contribute to ‘career progression’ (ibid.); the wider orientation of the project is towards ‘strong, sustainable networks’ (ibid.) and capacity-building in Global South country contexts. Crucially, the goal is to create ‘multinational teams of ECRs with a desire to work together *beyond their PhDs*’ (p. 2, emphasis added). The PPS specification is explicitly informed by research on doctoral mobility, namely Ackers, Gill and Guth’s (2007) report *Doctoral Mobility in the Social Sciences*, and the research influence is clear in, for example, the emphasis on team mobility as ‘reduc[ing] the risk of...marginalised and isolated situations’ for mobile doctoral students (ESRCa, n.d., p. 1). The skills agenda is present in the PPS, but there are also clear knowledge-oriented goals

such as to ‘advance the frontiers of knowledge’ (ibid.) and for the ‘intellectual development’ (ibid.) of the doctoral student participants.

While the guidance and applications for both schemes feed into the ideal of mobility as a universal, future-oriented good, a retrospective reading of these documents and the visit reports from a CAMA perspective brings to the fore a number of considerations. Firstly, although both schemes to some extent met the goals set by the ESRC, there were also negative outcomes from the schemes, particularly from the OIV. The OIV in fact led to a *closing down* of further opportunities in France. Although I had already lived in Paris and was familiar with the language, geography, transport systems and to a degree the university system, this knowledge from my undergraduate mobility did not prepare me for the lack of engagement with me as a doctoral student or as a proto-academic. Numerous efforts to make contact with and meet academics repeatedly resulted in invitations to sit in on a class, and, because of my informal affiliation with my referee’s university and the relatively weak nature of the relationship with my key contact, the doctoral student community remained closed to me. The progression I had planned from passive to active participation proved impossible within the conditions of the visits. None of my offers to collaborate or give presentations were taken up, and at the time of writing I am not in contact with a single person that I met during the OIV, including the key contact. As shown here, if the circumstances do not work out, mobility can also close down collaboration, and as such holds a fragile status as a ‘universal good’.

A second consideration is that the ways in which mobility as a universal good is framed in the funding guidance mean that certain mobility benefits ‘do not count’, and as such are not included in evaluations or evidence feeding into future funding. There were many benefits to participating in the OIV which are discernible from my visit reports and the retrospective reflections that these evoke. Firstly, the intellectual benefits were substantial, though intellectual development is not stated as an

aim in the guidance. The opportunity to attend 24 seminars, classes and events on gender across eight different institutional contexts in Paris was hugely enriching, and there is no doubt that my research benefited from dedicated time to simply listen. Interestingly, learning as such is not prioritised in the OIV guidance, but the OIV resulted in learning and knowledge – the satisfying of intellectual curiosity – that exceed the skills agenda. For the PPS, the scheme aims were somewhat more expansive than the OIV's, so the intellectual benefit that ensued from the knowledge sharing activities is accounted for within the scheme. Even so, there were benefits which were difficult to capture, such as a public supervision meeting at UFS, where the three doctoral students in PPS presented on our doctoral research in progress, and the South African and UK supervisors and a guest academic gave feedback and asked questions on our research. The comments and questions posed to me about my project came from a different geopolitical context, which required me to reframe my project with a different justification for a new audience; this contributed further to the epistemological foundation of my doctoral and subsequent research. The CAMA perspective, in which the normative values attached to mobility are called into question, also calls into question the normative expectations of the benefits of mobility, and asks for a more comprehensive expansion of the 'good' of mobility.

Mobile subjects

Moving into the second aspect of CAMA, the mobility schemes are now reframed from the perspective of the mobile subject, whose subjectivity is both structurally determined, and dynamic and shifting. As a mobile subject, I have high motility and the structural constraints on my mobility are relatively limited. This is necessary to state because the conditions of the OIV were extremely challenging even for someone in my position, which brings to light the exclusionary nature of this scheme (at least at the time of my participation). The principal obstacle for the programme was the insufficient funding, which did not cover accommodation, and which was allocated according to

country-wide rates set by the ESRC and which did not therefore allow for differences in cost of living in different areas of France. As a result, I rented the cheapest room I could find, which was freezing, unheated save for a small standalone heater, and was filled at 3am every day with strong cigarette smoke wafting under the door from the neighbour who shared the other half of the subdivided apartment. In contrast, as mentioned above, the PPS scheme was well resourced, which meant that there was no expectation that participants in the scheme would meet their own costs for any part of the visits. I did not have dependent caring responsibilities, where mobility is particularly challenging (Henderson & Moreau, in review), but I do have a partner, and this fact underpinned my decision to engage in shorter but more numerous trips. However the shorter visits were disruptive to the household routines (see more on this issue in Henderson, Cao and Mansuy, 2018). In relation to the OIV, contextual constraints featured, in that French academia operates differently to UK academia, and my lack of social capital in the form of local or locally known people and lack of institutional support both meant that no one could advise me on what to do and that the system was closed to me as an outsider. The nature of the university system in Paris meant that classes were held in many different locations, often in old buildings with no signs, which were geographically distant from each other, where people were rushing to get there and then leave again, and social space was limited to standing outside in cliques to smoke a cigarette. For a visitor (and a non-smoker), the scope for making contacts in this environment was limited. The PPS, however, was characterised by the structural privilege and colonial legacy of British academia in South Africa, and this was amplified by the team visit with supervisors and supervisees travelling together: we were shown overwhelming hospitality, and everything was taken care of for us. Furthermore, the research centre was located in one building, so most of our activities were concentrated in one area of the university; the programme included some shared meals; the accommodation was in walking distance of the campus.

While it is relatively easy to identify the structural constraints that shaped my experience of the OIV and PPS, it is perhaps harder both to access and then expose the dynamic and shifting nature of subjectivity in conditions of mobility. Considering that subjectivity is at least in part constituted through the ways in which others recognise and interpellate us (Butler, 1997), mobile subjects do not just move through space unscathed: mobile subjectivity is constituted and reconstituted by myriad micro-moments. The mobile subject is vulnerable to resignification, because, as stated above, the world is turned upside down by mobility (Parker and Weik, 2014), and familiar ways of making sense of social situations and institutional contexts are defamiliarised. With the OIV, I entered the programme unsure of my identity – was I a researcher, a student, a colleague, a friend? As a visitor, who should I try to be and how would I convey that – and would people read me in the intended way? For the first OIV visit, I tried to assume what I thought was a ‘classic’ ‘researcher’ look; and hoped the academics would recognise me as a legitimate subject, a potential colleague. However, the academics still asked me to sit in on their classes rather than meet with them, and in the classes I felt conspicuous as neither a teacher/researcher nor a fellow student. As I recorded in my notebook (25 February 2013), in one session an academic introduced me as a visitor to the class and then, when I hesitated, unsure of where to sit or whether I was supposed to say something, said ‘*Je vais pas vous faire rester debout*’ (‘I won’t keep you standing up’) – I felt put in my place, and yet my place was no place (Butler, 1997).

During the PPS, the effects of travelling with my supervisors, and of welcoming the visitors to my home university were that I was less vulnerable to resignification than during the OIV; in a sense my existing doctoral subjectivity travelled with me. However there were moments where our role as ‘international visitors’ created uncomfortable scenarios. During the first visit, we visited UFS’s QwaQwa campus, a rural campus with a predominantly black student population four hours’ drive from Bloemfontein. While our welcome at UFS had been warm but recognisably ‘professional’,

during this visit, we were interpellated by the QwaQwa leadership and academics as ‘special visitors’, where the special china was set out for our tea, and we were gifted locally produced artefacts – a broom, a pot, and a woven table mat. One of the UK doctoral supervisors gave a seminar, and although many of the students seemed engaged, we wondered if they had been given a choice about attending. This snapshot of another side of South African higher education, and our interpellation within the colonial legacy, left me with a feeling of having parachuted into a whole new context within South Africa without having the reference points to make sense of the context or of ourselves within that context. The second time I stayed in Bloemfontein, the university was mainly closed because of the #FeesMustFall protests. The protests had only just hit UFS, and as such I had not been able to reschedule my trip, but I was unable to give my seminar or other organised activities. The context of that visit was relocated to the guest house where I was staying, local restaurants, and the mall. Walking out of the campus, crowds of mainly black and coloured students moved purposefully in the opposite direction. Again this experience was tinged with postcolonial discomfort, as my South African colleagues apologized profusely for my ‘wasted’ trip and went out of their way to make the trip worthwhile, as meanwhile the university sector was literally on fire.

Mobility processes

In re-reading the materials from the visits for both schemes, particularly the pages from my appointments diary and the accompanying materials (eg. event flyers, course timetables), I was struck by a common question that links the two schemes – what does enacting the purpose of a mobility scheme mean in practice? This question arises from the fact that my schedule for all of the trips was sparsely filled, in comparison with my everyday work life. And yet my memory of the visits was of the schedule having been packed with activities. This exposes a key question for mobility schemes – is the very fact of being away a key dimension of the scheme, or does only time in which specific activities are contributing to the identified aims of the scheme count? Mobility

skills such as obtaining visas and planning an itinerary, and navigating a new area or a public transport system are surely part of becoming an internationally engaged academic, and indeed these skills and the associated processes are highly nuanced, and take time to develop. Furthermore, just being in situ involves valuable experiences of experiencing ways of life in different places, and also resourcefulness in working out how to spend unoccupied time in a new context. This question arises when I consider that an OIV day that involved two different seminars in different places, or a PPS day where I had given a workshop and then was free until dinner, was still a day with many spare hours to fill, and yet due to the intensity of the activities, I was also tired after these short days. Lying under the duvet eating tomato soup in Paris, talking to my partner on Skype for a whole afternoon, was I fulfilling the purpose of the OIV? Reading Clare Hemmings' (2011) book *Why Stories Matter* at a coffee shop in the mall in Bloemfontein, thinking about my PhD thesis, or drinking tea at my supervisor's mum's house, was I participating in the PPS?

Being there, enacting a mobile subjectivity on a 24-hour basis, it is impossible to enact a funded, productive mobility all of the time, particularly when the very fact of *being there* means sleeping badly, or taking longer to plan routes and arrangements, or waiting for others to confirm plans. During all of the visits, I experienced time differently, as an embodied experience, including seemingly interminable waiting, and wondering where to put my body and what to do with it, and constantly feeling guilty about being funded to do much less work than I would usually find acceptable. Several people advised me to 'do nice things', to explore local areas and access 'culture', but this was an added pressure as it represented another visit curriculum, another evaluation, and in Paris I had already spent half the day trying to find institutions, and in Bloemfontein I did not know where to go or how to get there. I have now developed a repertoire of time-filling tasks for visits, and an internal dialogue that speaks back to the doubts about funding and productivity, which dispel the overwhelming and uncomfortable feeling of being a body in an unfamiliar room in a new place. Urry

and Larsen (2011, p. 3) refer to departure for tourism purposes as ‘allowing one’s senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and mundane’, and I have come to understand these interminable moments of spare time during mobility visits as part of this passive experience of ‘senses engag[ing] with a set of stimuli’. While with longer term mobility routines can form, short-term academic mobility is characterised by an absence of a context-specific routine; instead, as (Vincent-Geslin and Ravalet, 2015) found in their study of business travel, generic routines are adapted to each new context – this is a form of mobility literacy which is vital but unmeasurable within funded mobility schemes.

Conclusion

Both of the doctoral mobility schemes analysed in this article were embedded in future-oriented discourses about the potential career benefits for doctoral researchers, and for the internationalisation of research. The schemes diverged in many ways, including in the resourcing and conditions of the mobility programmes. The resourcing of the OIV was a clear issue: funders should consider what they are asking doctoral students (who are not permitted to engage in paid work for more than 12 hours per week) to self-fund, and how these expectations may reinforce the exclusionary nature of the mobility imperative. The PPS was well-resourced, but also required full institutional backing, which is unlikely to be gained without the intervention of doctoral supervisors and doctoral school leaders. As such the motility of the student to a large extent depends on the motility of their supervisors, and supervisors’ commitment to enhancing their students’ mobility. A final consideration results from the autoethnographic analysis of the schemes, which has captured intricacies of experience that are unlikely to be captured in surveys or interviews with researchers, or in the formal evaluations for the schemes. There may be a perception that short-term mobility is less exclusionary than longer term mobility, but short-term travel can also be more disruptive to home life because of its irregularity and intensity. Short-term mobility schemes should be evaluated for

equity purposes, to explore the ways in which such schemes contribute to the exclusionary nature of the mobility imperative. Furthermore, there were also benefits – learning and mobility skills, for example – which were not clearly recognised in the schemes’ aims; the aims and evaluation criteria could be further expanded to include these important outcomes.

This article set out to claim a place for short-term academic mobility in the wider field of academic mobilities research, where it is currently neglected in favour of researching longer stays. Short-term academic mobility fits within this wider academic mobilities research landscape in a number of ways: short-term stays can lead to longer stays through connections made; short-term travel enables the discovery of different locations, which may then widen the international nature of academics’ work and lead to new sites for research; short-term mobility hones mobility skills and the ability to ‘translate’ research into different paradigms, thus increasing the mobility potential for the future (particularly in the case of doctoral or ECR mobility); short-term and longer term mobilities coalesce in an individual’s career trajectory, and as such can be evaluated together for the effects on family life and for the exclusionary reproduction of the mobility imperative. All of these points constitute potential future directions for research. Finally, the article has introduced a Critical Academic Mobilities Approach (CAMA), which synthesises other critical, sociologically-oriented research on academic mobilities into three broad concerns: (i) questioning the status of mobility as a universal good; (ii) exploring the subjectivity of mobile subjects as dynamic and shifting, but also structurally determined; (iii) researching mobility *processes* (in addition to investments and outcomes).

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Table 1: Comparison of OIV and PPS – Scheme Conditions

Overseas Institutional Visit (OIV)	PhD Partnering Scheme (PPS)
Regular scheme	One-off pilot scheme
Student-led (only student travels)	Supervisor and student, primarily supervisor's links (both travel)
Allocated funding based on set rates for travel and living costs in host country	Budget proposal: up to £7,000 from ESRC, plus contributions from UK and host university
Funding attached to student from home HEI	Funding from both home and host institutions/research councils
Maximum total visit/s length 13 weeks, up to three visits, total visit length then added to the end of the funded period of the studentship as a funding extension	Maximum visit length not stated, number of visits not stipulated, visit length not added to the end of the funded period of the studentship
One-way travel	Exchange visit
Host country can be any country (with the exception of locations deemed unsafe); involves one host country only	Host country limited to developing/emerging countries (India, China, Chile prioritised, Colombia, Brazil, South Africa also listed); can involve more than one host country